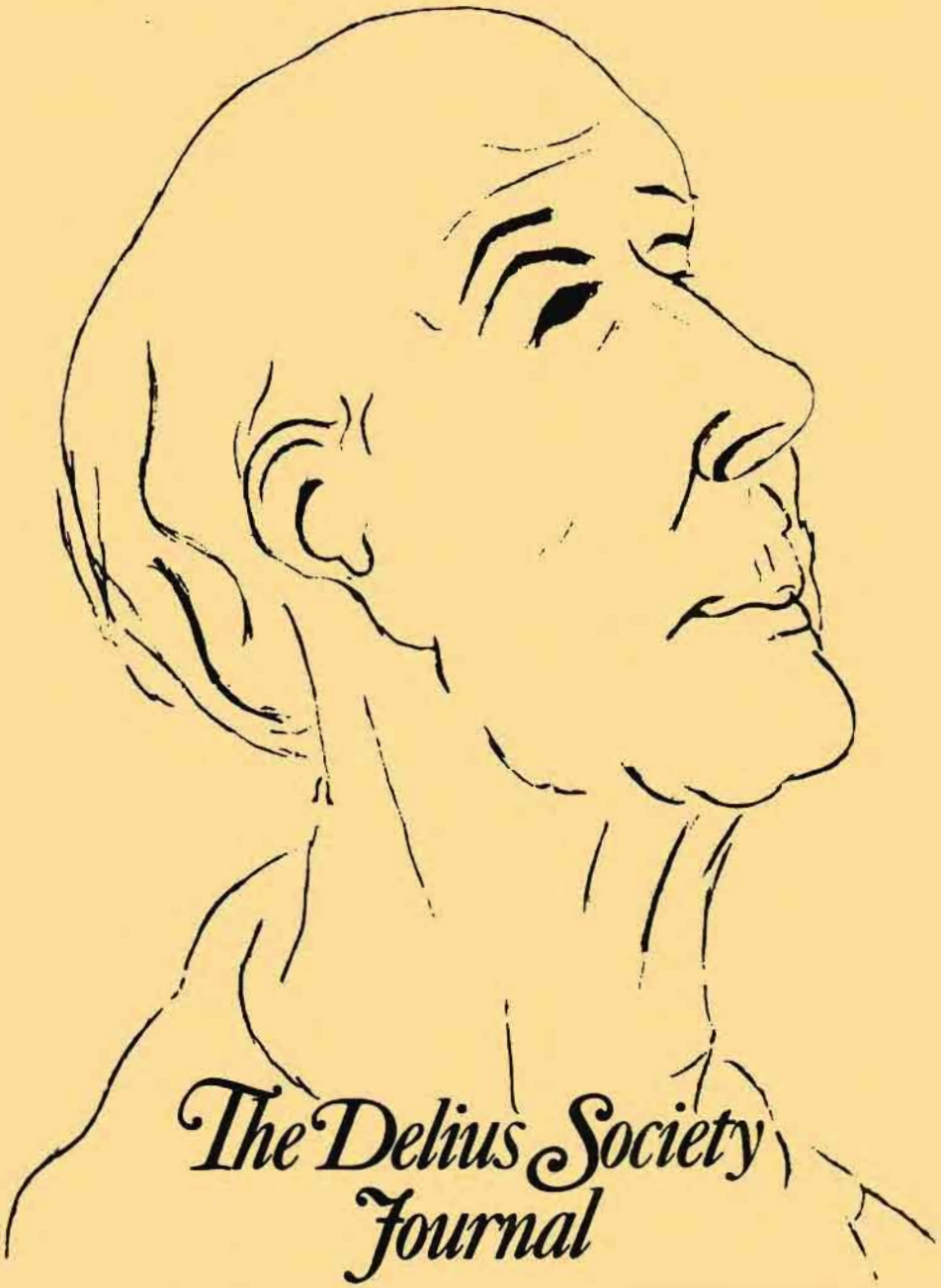
July 1977, Number 56



The Delius Society Journal

July 1977, Number 56

The Delius Society
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The Delius Society Journal

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Cover Illustration

F Delius by Dawn Redwood (after Kapp)

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EDITORIAL

For the second year in succession the AGM and Dinner of the Delius Society were blessed with warm and sunny weather. By a happy coincidence, too, another event of major interest was held two evenings previously as had happened last year. This time it was the talk given by our President at Limpsfield as part of the local Church Festival. Clearly the weather is a factor over which we have no control, but it is obvious that in the second case a precedent has been set, and efforts will have to be made in future years to find similar entertainment for the many members who make their ways to London for the AGM. This year these included no less than six from America: those regular spring visitors Mr. Bob Lyons and Mr. Willard Perrott from Pittsburgh, and also Mr. William Marsh Jnr. and Mr. David Duke of the newly-formed Philadelphia branch, and two whom we have not seen before, Mr. and Mrs. William Parr of Willingboro, New Jersey. In addition we were pleased to welcome, for the third consecutive year, Fräulein Evelin Gerhardi and her sister Frau Malve Steinweg from Lüdenscheid, West Germany. A cosmopolitan gathering took over the lounge-bar of a hostelry in Oxted for an hour on the evening of Thursday, 26th May, and the subsequent lecture at Limpsfield could have been sold out several times. Some forty members attended the AGM and, despite a very disappointing response to my letter concerning committee nominations, the vacancies were filled by Mr. Peter Lyons, Mr. Clifford Bennett and Mr. Lyndon Jenkins. The fact that two of these members live a good way from London can only be seen as a poor reflection on the support of those living in the metropolis. Numbers rose to fifty for the dinner in the evening, at which we welcomed Mr. and Mrs. Eric Fenby and Major Norman Millar, co-trustee of the Delius Trust. Mr. Raymond Bantock, son of the composer, was also present, and a new member from New Zealand, Mr. Simon Upton. Speeches were made by Mr. Fenby, Major Millar and Mr. Bantock.

* * *

The next meeting will be held on 22nd September when Eric Fenby will talk about the 'Cello and Double Concertos. It will take place as usual at Holborn Public Libraries, Theobalds Road, WC1. The venue for future meetings will be intimated in our next issue. The remarks quoted in the last number concerning *The Magic Fountain* appear to have been somewhat premature: the opera was recorded at the BBC theatre in Golders Green on Saturday, 30th July under Norman del Mar, and will probably be broadcast towards the end of this year.

* * *

Messrs. Boosey & Hawkes have recently published a study-score of the *Idyll* at £3.50, and an album of songs at £3.00. The latter contains all the songs of which Booseys hold the copyright, including the

Nietzsche settings, and means that all the published songs of Delius are available in print for the first time for many years. I understand that the same firm is planning to issue a study-score of *Koanga* early next year. The Sonata in B major for Violin and Piano is now available, price £5.00

* * *

The performance of *Brigg Fair* scheduled for 3rd July at the Royal Festival Hall under the baton of Sir Charles Groves did not take place, but our Vice-president gave three performances of *In A Summer Garden* instead: one in Liverpool, one in Birmingham and one in London. The last-named was the only Delius item at this year's Proms, and Sir Charles has also chosen to include *Brigg Fair* in his Liverpool farewell concert. I believe I am right in saying that there has been only one major Delius performance by a professional orchestra in London during the past season, which compares very badly with the number given in other cities. One is reminded of a letter written by Elgar in 1903 to the chairman of the Morecambe Music Festival in which he referred to "……the fact, already known abroad and to some few of us in England, that the living centre of music in Great Britain is not London but somewhere farther North."

* * *

It is no secret that Robert Threlfall has been working for some time on a definitive *Catalogue of the Compositions of Frederick Delius: sources and references.* This book, which is planned to be a companion volume to Rachel Lowe's *Catalogue of the Music Archive of the Delius Trust,* is now in the press and should appear before the end of 1977. Consisting of 200 pages of text and more than 30 illustrations in facsimile, chiefly of unpublished MSS, it is being printed by the Scolar Press and will be distributed by Boosey & Hawkes for the Delius Trust. Full details of all works, their dates of composition, publication and performance, particulars of the orchestration and of the words used in the vocal settings, also notes on arrangements, are included in what should become a standard reference book on the subject.

* * *

Some weeks ago I found myself at the Victoria and Albert Museum where I was delighted to find an exhibition of drawings by the late Gerard Hoffnung. Among many old favourites were a number which I, at least, had not seen before, particularly interesting being a series of caricatures of well-known conductors. Sir Adrian Boult, renowned for his economical beat, appears with his arms manacled to the lectern, while the allegedly-vain Sir Malcolm Sargent conducts before a full-length mirror and with a large comb tucked behind one ear. Sir Thomas Beecham has a catapult close to hand on the side of his lectern, on which reposes a score by Delius. (Those lacking a sense of humour will, of course, protest that there is an inaccuracy here, for Beecham rarely

conducted Delius from the score in later years.)

* * *

The Hon. Treasurer writes: "I am always glad to get letters, particularly appreciative letters, from members when they pay their subscriptions, and I do my best to answer specific enquiries. I should not wish to be thought discourteous, however, by those members who are good enough to enclose a few words of greeting when they send me their cheque, but the fact is that the membership of the society is now such that it is just not practical for me to acknowledge every such letter that reaches me. I hope that members will continue to write, nevertheless: a solution will be sought to problems and complaints, and complimentary remarks will be passed on to such members of the committee as are concerned."

* * *

I was delighted to hear recently from Julian Lloyd Webber that he is about to embark on a tour of South Africa. He is including the Delius 'Cello Sonata in his repertoire, and intends to play it in Johannesburg, Pretoria and Windhoek.

* * *

From Australia I learn that *The Walk to the Paradise Garden* was played in such towns as Kalgoorlie and Geraldton in West Australia on a recent tour by the conductor David Measham. Asked by Denham Ford if Delius was one of his composers, he replied: "No-one who has ever played for Tommy could fail to be infected."

* * *

Estelle Palmley writes: As a long-time admirer of the singer, Peggy Lee, I listened with interest to her choice of eight records for the Desert Island Discs programme on 14th May, which included music by Respighi, Brahms and Bach, and Delius's *Walk to the Paradise Garden*. I was very delighted when asked to narrow her choice down to one record that Miss Lee opted for *Walk to the Paradise Garden*.

After reading the Interview *Tormé on Delius* in Journal No. 55, I particularly noted a link-up between these two Delians in a book by Ken Barnes (*Sinatra and the Great Song Stylists*), in which, referring to the compositions of Mel Tormé, he says of *The California Suite*..... "He spent six months composing the music and lyrics for this 30-minute suite dedicated to his adopted home state and, on its completion, it was recorded by Capitol with Tormé singing the leading part opposite a girl calling herself Susan Melton (a nom de plume for none other than Peggy Lee)."

* * *

Finally — have you displayed your poster yet?

"FIVE LITTLE PIECES"

by Delius orchestrated by Fenby

David Tall

In the autumn of this year, almost fifty years since Eric Fenby's first historic journey to Grez-sur-Loing, Boosey & Hawkes are to make his orchestration of *Five Pieces* by Delius available in their Hire Library. The *Five Pieces* are none other than the collection of Delius piano works published by Universal in 1925, comprising the Mazurka, Waltz for a Little Girl, Waltz, Lullaby for a Modern Baby and Toccata. The precise origins and dedications of some of these piano pieces are shrouded in mystery. In August 1922 Delius dictated a letter to Norman O'Neill in which he says (1):

"Please tell Adine that I have just written a little prelude for Yvonne for her album and will send it in a few days."

Yvonne, the daughter of Norman and Adine O'Neill, was Delius's god-daughter. She had her seventh birthday in January, 1923. Two months later, in March, Jelka Delius wrote to Adine (2):

"I posted seven little pieces to you yesterday. Fred wants me to tell you that he composed them, each one, so as to make an easy piece for Yvonne, but they all grew too difficult, but the seventh one, we think, is quite easy; should anything be too wide stretched for her hands, it can be arranged by giving it to the other hand, I think.

Fred is rather diffident about the pieces and begs you to see if you think *all* of them should be published, or some left back. He leaves you to see. They are my début as an amanuensis, as he cannot write and has to dictate it all to me and I find it pretty difficult....."

On July 16th 1923 a contract was signed with Anglo-French (3) to publish the *Three Piano Preludes*. It is significant to note that this was the only Delius work to be published by Anglo-French, whilst Norman O'Neill published a number of pieces with them around this time, including *Four Little Dances* in 1923, also written for Yvonne (4). This gives fairly strong circumstantial evidence to conjecture that the *Three Preludes* were included in the seven pieces written for Yvonne and that Adine O'Neill recommended their publication to Delius. All three fit the description "to make an easy piece for Yvonne" which "grew too difficult."

There is a problem with this interpretation in that the first prelude was dedicated to Evlyn Howard-Jones on publication, the second to Adine O'Neill, and the third to nobody. Would Delius behave in such a way to his god-child? A consistent explanation is possible. Were Adine O'Neill to reply that the *Waltz for a Little Girl* was indeed suitable for

Yvonne, whilst the *Preludes,* in particular, were not, then this would release his obligation to his god-daughter. Yvonne still has the autograph copy of this waltz in her possession. Perhaps this piece was the only one suitable for a seven year old girl (and inspection of the other known possibilities confirms this), in which case she may have only been given this one manuscript. In answer to a recent enquiry her husband Derek Hudson (author of Norman O'Neill's biography), replied that his wife does not know anything more about the seven pieces mentioned above (5). Perhaps a recommendation to publish from Adine and a second opinion from Howard-Jones led to the dedications. Other advice may have been given (for instance, the published *Prelude* I was originally (6) numbered III). In the abscence of further evidence such possibilities remain conjectural.

Turning to the *Five Piano Pieces* published by Universal, we are on much firmer ground in supposing that the first two (*Mazurka* and *Waltz for a Little Girl*) were among the seven pieces sent for Yvonne. Eric Fenby has confirmed by letter (7) that he always understood that Delius intended these to be dedicated to Yvonne and the remaining pieces to Howard-Jones, though he adds that Delius was rather vague about such things towards the end of his life. Certainly the *Mazurka* and *Waltz* fit the description of Jelka's letter to Adine, both are stylistically suitable for a little girl, but the *Mazurka* develops stretches too wide for a seven year old, whilst the *Waltz* contains stretches in the left hand which can be accommodated by the right. Almost certainly the *Waltz for a little Girl* is one thought to be "quite easy" in Jelka Delius's letter.

The third of the *Five Pieces* is to be found in the Delius Trust Archive (8) dedicated to Howard-Jones and dated "Croissy 1891 (finished Grez-sur-Loing 1922)". Its thick chordal writing contrasts strongly with the simple melody and accompaniment of the *Mazurka* and *Waltz.* If Jelka's description is to be taken literally ("he composed them, *each one,* so as to make an easy piece for Yvonne"), then this cannot have been one of the seven pieces sent for her. Nor could the fourth of the *Five Pieces,* because this is the *Lullaby for a Modern Baby* which is not a piano piece at all, but a melody "to be hummed or violin con sord." with a rich chordal accompaniment. The fifth piece, however, was originally called *Etude,* (9) a perfectly appropriate title were it intended to extend the technique of a seven year old, though once again it grows "too difficult". Were it later dedicated to an adult, then the change in title to *Toccata* would be quite natural.

One other piece of evidence to be taken into account (for which I am indebted to Christopher Redwood), is a letter which Jelka Delius wrote to Cecily Arnold in 1933, stating that the dates of the Five Pieces are 1891 to 1924. The final date is interesting because the autographs give *Mazurka* - 1923, *Waltz for a Little Girl* - 1923, *Waltz* 1891 to 1922, *Lullaby* - 1923, *Toccata* - no date. At one stage I

considered that this might mean that the *Toccata* fills the vacant 1924 spot, but there were small alterations to the second waltz on publication (10) which could also give rise to the later year. On balance I still favour the idea that the *Toccata* started life as an *Etude* intented for Delius's god-daughter, probably composed in late 1922 or early 1923.

We can therefore make a number of conjectures (based on circumstantial and stylistic evidence), that the seven pieces sent to Yvonne were the *Three Preludes* (fairly likely), the *Mazurka* (more likely), the *Waltz for a Little Girl* (almost certain), the *Waltz* begun at Croissy (very unlikely) and the *Toccata* (possibly), with perhaps one (or more) pieces replacing some of these. The Archive of the Delius Trust Volume 35 folio 18b contains an unidentified sketch on the same page as a sketch of one of the preludes which may be one of Delius's attempts at writing for Yvonne. On the available evidence it would be fair to suggest that Yvonne's seven pieces consisted of the preludes, the *Mazurka* and *Waltz for a Little Girl*, the *Toccata* and one other piece.

Following the decision to publish the *Preludes*, there remained a handful of piano pieces and the *Lullaby* at Grez. In 1924 Delius completed the second violin sonata and Howard-Jones edited the piano part. He gave great pleasure to Delius in these later times, and Eric Fenby confirms how much Delius enjoyed his playing of the piano pieces. It may have been that Howard-Jones compiled a little performance for Delius out of the available manuscripts with his wife as violinist filling in the melody line of the *Lullaby*. The basic tonalities of the *Five Pieces* in published order rise by a succession of fifths, F,C,G, D,A, and omission of the *Lullaby* leaves a far less satisfying collection in performance. So it may have come about that the *Five Piano Pieces* were published with a violin item among them, dedicated in the published copy (though not on the manuscripts submitted to Universal) to Evlyn Howard-Jones.

The Fenby orchestration of the *Five Pieces* dates from 1964. At that time I was a student at Wadham College, Oxford, planning a programme for a concert with a small orchestra. The Delius repertoire for such an ensemble is very small. Apart from *The First Cuckoo, Summer Night* and *Song before Sunrise*, the pieces available owe their existence to Eric Fenby, including the *Irmelin Prelude*, the *Intermezzo from Fennimore and Gerda* and *Caprice and Elegy*. With the enthusiasm and naivety of a student I simply wrote to Mr. Fenby asking if he would be willing to arrange the *Five Pieces* for me. I remember suggesting that no harp be used; although we had an excellent player available, I was concerned that the orchestration should be suitable for other orchestras with more modest resources.

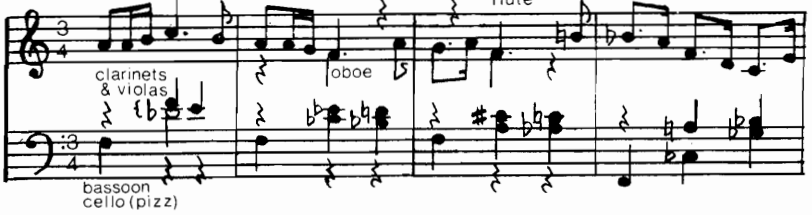
The rest is history. Mr. Fenby demonstrated his natural generosity of spirit; he made the arrangement and travelled to Oxford to hear the first performance on May 16th 1964 at his own expense. A rehearsal

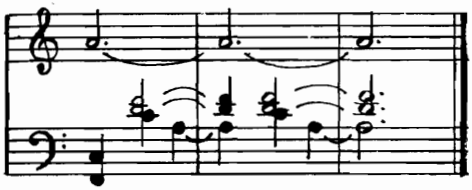
tape is still in existence. The playing was satisfactory, the orchestrations magnificent. Subsequently Mr. Fenby made some minor amendments to the score and offered it to Boosey & Hawkes. The decision of the publishers at the time was that demand would not justify the publication, but the increasing interest in the music of Delius has now led to the promised publication this year.

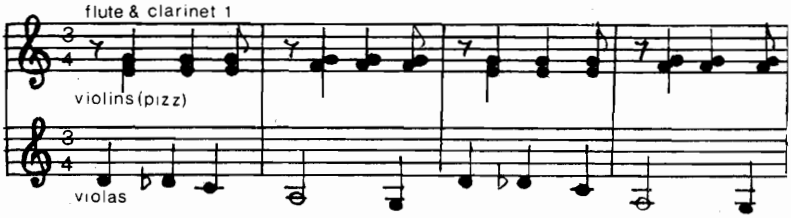
The orchestration repays close study. Only Fenby has the authority to approach such a task in a creative manner, in this case using an orchestral combination which does not occur in any other Delius work: 1 flute, 1 oboe, 2 clarinets, 1 bassoon, 2 horns, 1 trumpet, timpani (optional) and strings. Throughout he remains true not only to the spirit of the music, but also to the letter. In his recollections of the composer he wrote

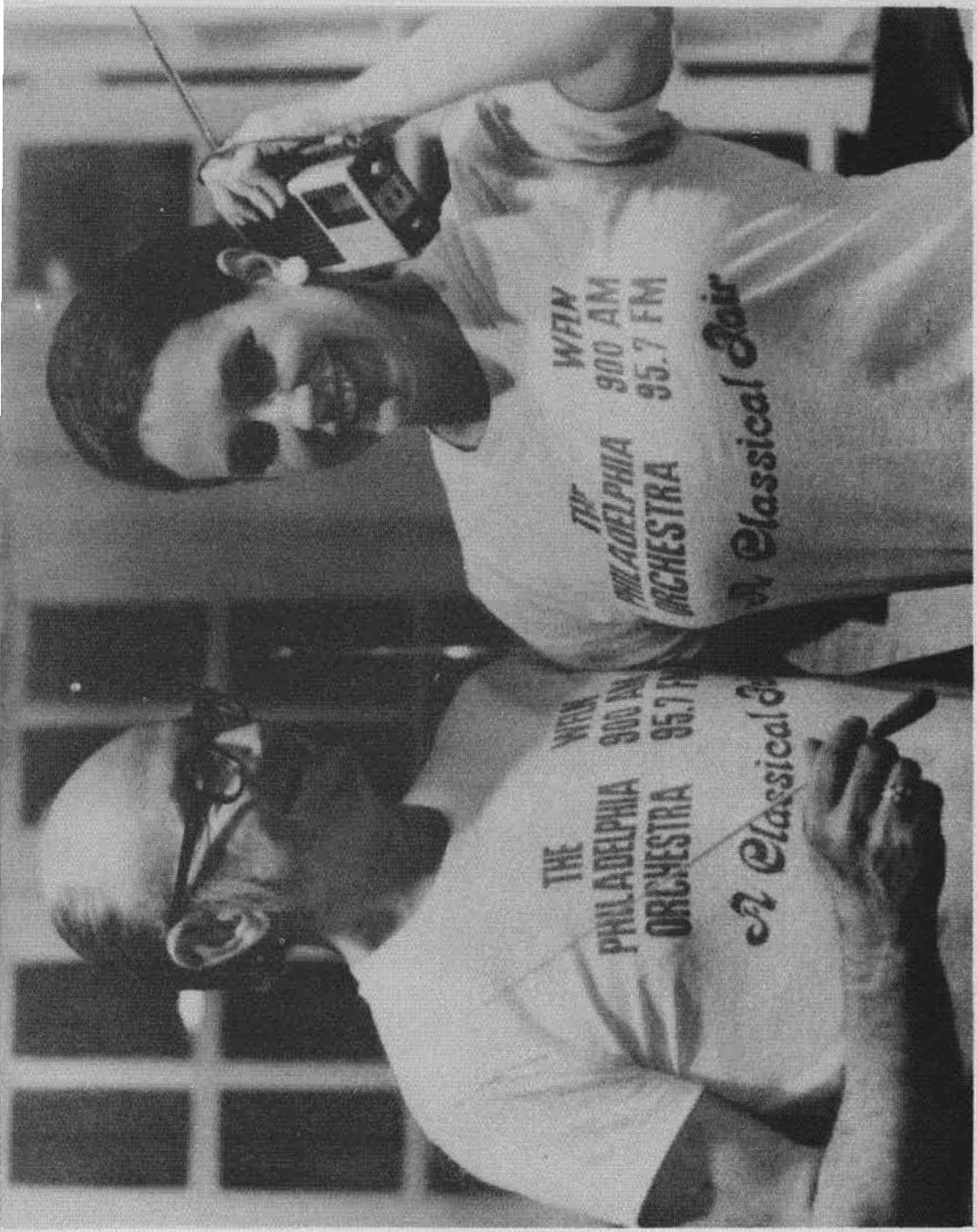
> "Delius never objected to a conductor altering his phrasing or, within reason, his printed dynamics. Even with Beecham he warned me - 'Don't let him tamper with the notes!' "

His orchestration of the *Five Pieces* stays remarkably close to the actual notes of the original, transcribed at the same pitch (no octave doubling) save only for those places, such as the second waltz, where the layout for two hands on the keyboard is unsuitable for an orchestra. Even here the redisposition is limited to inner parts of chords and kept to a remarkable minimum.

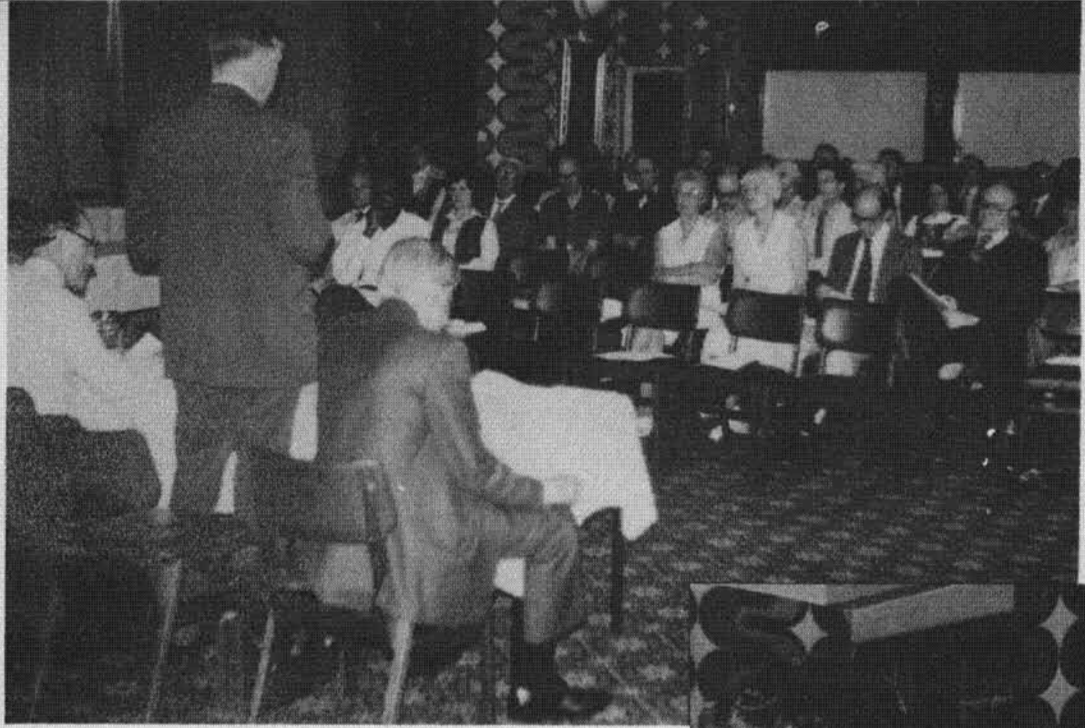
There are some happy coincidences in the orchestral arrangement. Just as the "little girl", Yvonne O'Neill, was Delius's god-child, so her daughter, Katherine, is the god-child of Eric Fenby. It is fitting too that the Mazurka of the *Second Dance Rhapsody,* dedicated to Norman O'Neill, should find orchestral echoes in the Fenby arrangement of the *Mazurka* in this collection.

In a typically Delian fashion the melody is passed between flute and oboe for eight bars. In the fifth bar the accompaniment is taken by the strings, first beat pizzicato, second and third arco, reminiscent of passages in the *Second Dance Rhapsody* (see bars 37, 38, 98-102 of the latter). This is no shallow pastiche, rather it is the distillation of the spirit of

the composer through his amanuensis. In a recent letter, Mr. Fenby tells me that he had no model in mind when he made the arrangements, any relationship with other works being purely subconscious. In this *Mazurka* he proceeds to reverse the figuration (first beat arco followed by pizzicato), which Delius does not. (One may speculate, for instance, as to whether Bach would pass an academic examination in writing four-part Bach Chorales? Probably not. True genius creates anew, it does not merely reconstitute former conceptions. So it is with Fenby's re-creation of Delius). A typical instance is the placing of the double basses at the end of the *Mazurka*. The piano part is like this:

Fenby sustains the bottom C and F on 'cellos, supporting the first beat with a low timpani F. He breathes life into the offbeat accompaniment of strings and woodwind with a second beat double bass pizzicato *above* the 'cellos (sounding A below middle C). It is standard orchestral technique to complement strings arco with double bass pizzicato, even with the latter high in their range (see nine bars before the end of the fourth section of the *Requiem*). It is highly non-standard to use the imaginative placing found in this *Mazurka*.

The *Waltz for a Little Girl* is a dreamy miniature (lento, tempo di valse):

The left hand with its low G looks like a violin part. Fenby's solution is less immediately obvious, giving this melody to the violas (as did Delius in the slow melody of *Paris*). The accompaniment is first provided by a flute and clarinet, pointed by a single pizzicato each bar from the violins, then in bar nine it passes to the violins (arco), with a caressing warmth that is enhanced by the change in texture. This string



Two recent recruits to the Delius Society are William Smith, Associate Conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and his wife Deborah Carter. The pair are seen here wearing the T-shirts sold in a joint fund-raising effort with radio station WFCN. Photograph by courtesy of Louis G. Hood, Director of Public Relations for the Philadelphia Orchestra.



A.G.M
and
DINNER
1977

Top left: A general view of the AGM. With backs to the camera are Secretary John White, Chairman Rodney Meadows and Treasurer Gilbert Parfitt.

Lower left: "The Gramophone" Editor Malcolm Walker, Stephen Lloyd, Triad Press publisher Lewis Foreman and Joseph Vandernoot, who conducted the first British performance of "Fennimore and Gerda."

Centre: Prof. and Mrs. Eric Domville of Toronto and Mrs. Dawn Redwood.

Lower right: Treasurer Gilbert Parfitt, Midlands Branch Chairman Dick Kitching, Mr. and Mrs. William Parr of New Jersey and violinist David Stone.

Top right: Major Norman Millar of the Delius Trust addresses the dinner while Mr. Eric Fenby listens.

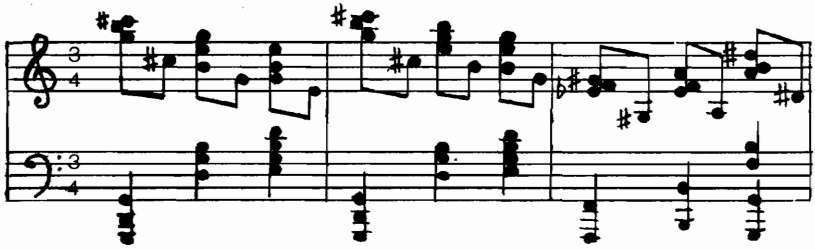
HISTORIC MEETING

Fräulein Evelin Gerhardi (right) last met Mr. E. Marshall Johnson, husband of the late Cecily Arnold, at Grez-sur-Loing in 1932. On 29th May 1977 Fräulein Gerhardi and her sister, Frau Malve Steinweg (left) visited Mr. Johnson at his 16th Century cottage in Moreton, Oxfordshire.

sound proves as novel here as it would have sounded dull were it to have begun the piece. The simplest touches of insight are so often the master strokes of wisdom. Typically Delian, too, is the horn solo just before the end and the dying fall of the clarinet in its chalumeau register in the closing bars.

The second waltz caused Fenby the greatest heart-searching. On April 13th 1964, he writes

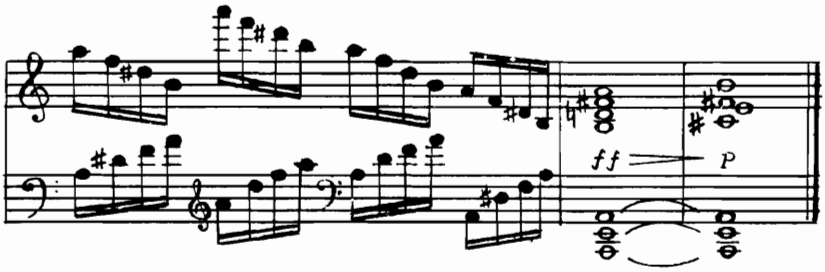
".....though I've worked III three ways I'm not satisfied."
Then again, on April 18th

"The real problem is the incessant quaver movement, tolerable on the keyboard, but appalling in the orchestra unless it can be given discreet figuration. The thickness of texture - well I can deal with that quite simply, in fact I agree that the suite at that point needs the full orchestra."

His solution is to give the quaver figuration to the upper strings at first, sustaining the outline in the rest of the orchestra, then, as the climax approaches, he reverses the process, giving the figuration to the woodwind.

The *Lullaby for a Modern Baby* should be more well-known: a Delius "Lollipop" to compare with the *Serenade from Hassan*. Brief though it is, its simple, lilting melody and rich harmony merit special attention.

Once more, the creative impulse in Fenby leads him away from sterile copying. The melody "to be hummed, or violin con sord.", has the only instrumental cue in this collection of pieces. In this orchestral arrange-

ment it is given first to flute, then to viola (unmuted) over muted string accompaniment - a happy inspiration.

The lullaby dies away to Delian silence as the modern baby sleeps, only to be violently awakened by the final *Toccata*. The pianistic figuration of this étude makes it difficult to conceive in an orchestral form. In 1964 I imagined it to be even more difficult to score than the second waltz. Should one fill out the harmony? If so, how? Fenby turns it into a dazzling orchestral showpiece by simply using the notes that Delius has left us. A little judicious sustaining here and there, a few orchestral doublings, almost always at the pitch of the piano original, and the result is an exiting conclusion to this brief suite of orchestral miniatures. True, the last two bars are a diminuendo, but this is more by the way of a collapse of nervous excitement, to be found, for instance, at the end of *Paris*. As in the latter work, the diminuendo is enhanced by reducing the orchestra in stages, in this case making complete logical sense of an ending which is far less satisfactory in the original piano version.

The *Five Little Pieces* (so named by Fenby), form a satisfying and coherent suite in their orchestral garb. The basic tonality moves up a fifth in each piece heightening the interest at each stage, and the orchestration smooths out some of the stylistic differences between the individual items. The original piano works are of minor significance in Delius's output, being no more than a convenient compilation of isolated miniatures. The orchestrations are far more significant, yielding an insight into the relationship between composer and amanuensis. The published works of the Delius-Fenby partnership show a discreet modesty on the part of Fenby, who clearly regarded himself merely as the instrument through whom the composer spoke. For instance the scores of *Songs of Farewell* and *A Song of Summer* make no mention of his participation, in marked contrast to other Delius scores emblazoned with the inscription "arranged by Sir Thomas Beecham". (How much better it would have been for posterity had Sir Thomas insisted on urtext editions, wherein his contributions had been clearly differentiated from the original.) Even the published score of *Caprice & Elegy* bears the

enigmatic inscription "Frederick Delius / Caprice / Elegy / for violin-cello solo and chamber orchestra / (Eric Fenby). In general Fenby is given credit through the acknowledgement of his piano reductions.

Since the death of Delius, Fenby has edited and arranged many pieces by the composer. Some are reductions for keyboard, some involve the reprocessing of orchestral music (for instance the *Intermezzo from Fennimore and Gerda,* seamlessly joined from three different parts of the opera) and some involve transmutation from one medium to another. Examples of the later include the *Two Aquarelles* from Wordless chorus to strings, and three current projects - the transcription of the string quartet for string orchestra and the arrangement of *Air and Dance* and *La Calinda* for flute (James Galway) and orchestra. There is also his arrangement of the *Elegy* for five 'cellos made in 1974 at the request of the late Douglas Cameron (Professor of 'cello at the Royal Academy). Only in the *Five Little Pieces* is a full-scale orchestration involved, so in these arrangements we have the only published example of Fenby orchestrating the music of Delius without the composer's guiding hand. They therefore yield an intriguing intimation of the method of the amanuensis distilled from the richness of his personal recollections of the composer, as well as being a welcome addition to the slender Delius repertoire for small orchestra.

1. Derek Hudson: *Norman O'Neill, A Life of Music* (Quality Press, London 1945) page 71.
2. ibid, P. 72.
3. Information from Robert Threlfall, Musical Adviser to the Delius Trust.
4. Derek Hudson, pp. 112, 156.
5. Letter from Derek Hudson to the author, 17th May 1977.
6. Rachel Lowe: *A Catalogue of the Music Archive of the Delius Trust* (Boosey & Hawkes, London 1974) p. 113.
7. Letter from Eric Fenby to the author, 12th May 1977.
8. Rachel Lowe, p. 113.
9. ibid, p. 114.
10. ibid, p. 113.
11. Eric Fenby: *Delius as I Knew Him* (G. Bell & Sons 1936, revised Icon Books, London 1966, reprinted Westport Publications, London 1977) p. 204.

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DELIUS ON RECORD

by CHRISTOPHER REDWOOD

As I have admitted to not being the most enthusiastic of record collectors, I should perhaps begin by explaining why I am writing this section myself. Readers may rest assured that Lyndon Jenkins has not completely forsaken us for *Classical Music Weekly*, and will, I hope, on some future occasion discuss in greater detail the records I intend to deal with here, namely the first box of Beecham-Delius transfers. There is not space to go into detailed comparisons between these pre-war recordings and later ones, but merely to make general comments on the set as a whole. I confess that I was less than enthusiastic over the earlier transfers of the Violin and Piano Concertos, and I therefore purchased this box more for interest in the performances than for sheer listening pleasure. However, I have to state frankly that I was staggered when I first listened to them and still find it almost unbelievable that the sound from 78s can be brought up so well. (An idea for a future meeting: perhaps Tony Griffiths could tell us how he did it?) The sound *is* cramped in the big climaxes and details are missing; some pieces still contain surface hiss - the previously unreleased chorus from *Hassan* is one, but it is such a little gem that we can overlook shortcomings.

The first record opens with a performance of *Paris* that has long been regarded by some as the best Beecham did. The sound is more forward than on his later recording, and the tempi less free. The latter is a general comment on most of these performances, and is to my mind an advantage. I also like the portamento in the string-playing, and we must remember that this is how Delius would have heard it. *Sea Drift* on the other side has John Brownlee, Covent Garden's Koanga, as soloist. I never purchased Beecham's later recording because I didn't care for Bruce Boyce's vibrant tones; Brownlee is more sharply-focussed, and the orchestral phrasing is, as ever, exquisite. Apart from some lack of resonance the choruses come out extremely well, especially if the treble is turned up a little. (How extraordinary to be able to recommend a treble-boost on 78 transfers!) The *Irmelin* Prelude, though well played, sounds surprisingly trite after *Sea Drift*; I fear this is one of my complaints about records in general: grateful as I am to the company for squeezing in as much as they can, the juxtaposition of works often leaves much to be desired. (A later recording of *In A Summer Garden* was always spoiled for me by leading on to a piece of sentimental nonsense by my unfavourite non-composer!)

The greater part of the second record is taken up by *Appalachia*, a performance I find welcome as I have become increasingly aware of the shortcomings of the later version. Most interesting are two versions of *La Calinda* side by side: Beecham's extraction from the *Florida* Suite and Fenby's arrangement from *Koanga* which incorporates the vocal parts. Only the latter was released when recorded in 1938 and it is

undoubtedly the more exiting, although it is a fraction faster and sounds rushed at times. Record three contains what to my mind is the 'plum' of the whole box. *In a Summer Garden* is a piece I have always admired but never loved greatly, but this version came as a revelation. It is so much more subtle in phrasing, so beautifully played that it almost seems like a new piece of music. Not everyone will agree, but these are my feelings. *'In A Summer Garden Hassan'* says the label, but we know what is meant, and here is a curious thing. In 1938 Beecham took the final chorus at almost one-and-a-half times the speed he adopted in 1955. It is, in fact, slightly faster than Percy Fletcher's original 1923 recording. This is particularly interesting as Basil Dean recently told me that he found Beecham's playing of the chorus "too somnolent", whereas his stage presentation had ended "on a note of almost religious fervour." I take it he knows Beecham's later recording.

Record four contains the earliest recordings Beecham made of Delius's music, and the accolade goes to *Brigg Fair,* recorded in 1928, and which I have long admired on 78s. One has only to listen to the opening bars to hear at once how Beecham's attitude to Delius changed as the years went by; the flute solo is played at exactly the time-values specified in the score, and while one at first misses the freedom one has become used to, the overall effect seems to be absolutely right. We next come to two sides of songs which should go some way towards satisfying the many people who are currently asking for such recordings. Style in singing and recording of the human voice have probably advanced more in forty years than any other aspect of musical performance, and inevitably these renderings sound dated. However, we again come close to hearing the songs as Delius heard them, and have the added historical curiosity of Beecham's recherché piano-playing in three of them. Incidentally, Dora Labette recorded most of these under her pseudonym, Lisa Perli, a fact noted in the discography but not explained here. Of the fourteen songs she sings, only three have been released before. The final disc reminds us of Sir Thomas's voice in two BBC interviews, together with two previously-unissued orchestral excerpts from *A Mass of Life* in which the incomparable Dennis Brain plays 1st horn. Beecham plays Zarathustra's Midnight Song on the piano — rather more musically than before. He is not, as he claims here, "possibly one of the world's worst pianists", but his habit of spreading chords does become tiresome.

The programme note by Douglas Pudney reads well but I must take him to task for a large number of factual errors. The dates of composition of *An Arabesk* (1911) and *Over the Hills and Far Away* (1895-7) are given wrongly, and he seems to have been singularly unfortunate in his source of information on the operas: he has the dates of both the 1904 and 1935 productions of *Koanga* awry, as is that of *A Village Romeo and Juliet* at the Royal College of Music (it took place in 1934). In dating Beecham's recording of this opera, 1947 and 1948 are mentioned in different places; the latter is correct. It has

also been pointed out to me that *Paris* was first performed in Germany in 1901, and the English premiére took place in Liverpool; *In A Summer Garden* was first performed in 1908; the performance of *Brigg Fair* under Hermann Suter is mythical — it was first given in 1908 by Bantock in Liverpool ; and *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* was first conducted by Nikisch in Leipzig in 1913, Mengelberg's being the first British performance. It is a pity that such errors have occurred, especially as many of them could have been avoided by simple reference to Beecham's biography, the paperback reprint of which is included in the box. One last thought: the principal reason why Beecham re-recorded many Delius pieces was technical advance in the record industry. I wonder whether he would have considered it necessary had he known how well these performances could be made to sound on LPs?

At 90p a record (if you go to the right shop) the value is extraordinary. I have it from EMI that the set has not sold out, so members who were recently unable to obtain copies should persevere. The second box, which is planned to contain all the remaining 78s made by Beecham, including *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, will not appear before November 1978. It will not now be possible to include the famous Leeds Festival test-pressings of *Songs of Sunset* and *An Arabesk* owing to difficulties with the Musicians' Union, but it is planned to include the pictorial biography compiled by Lionel Carley and Robert Threlfall in paperback. (The hardback version is due from Oxford University Press in November 1977.)

Footnote: The Menuhin / Tortelier recording of the Violin and Double Concertos, ASD 3343, was released in June and broadcast by the BBC on 13th. The price is £3.50, but it can be obtained at £2.65.

BOOK REVIEWS

Percy Graiger By John Bird

Elek, 1976. £10.

This is not 'the definitive biography', as John Bird points out; but it is far more than the 'preliminary excercise' he claims it to be. It is a gentle, authoritative work which combines scholarship with compassion.

We tend to think of Percy Grainger (1882-1961) as an amiable eccentric who wrote unusual music for odd combinations of instruments, covering the scores with zany instructions in English; as a virtuoso pianist; as a pioneer folk-song collector who toured several parts of

the world with a phonograph and recording cylinders; and as an athlete capable of amazing tricks. All this is true, but there is much more besides. John Bird shows us Grainger the quietly sensitive musician and friend of Delius, who occasionally changed places with a harshly confident, even arrogant, alter ego; Grainger the reluctant virtuoso (because his recitals kept him from his composing); Grainger the inventor of electronic music machines (for which musical history still owes him recognition); Grainger the outrageous racist, who claimed to tolerate only the music of blue-eyed, fair-haired composers; Grainger the mother-dominated deviant; and many other facets of this rare gem of a man.

Grainger's friendship with Delius began in 1907, founded upon mutual admiration, and was to have a great influence on his musical life. John Bird chronicles the points at which the lives of the two composers touched. He quotes the famous Grainger assertion: "The three greatest composers who have ever lived are Bach, Delius and Duke Ellington." There is also the text of Delius's last letter in his own hand: an affectionate note to Grainger written in October 1924.

Grainger was capable of the most staggering inconsistencies. At one time he wrote, in a passage which reads like a parody of Nietzsche, "It is the duty of an over-soul to shine like snow on a mountain-top, luring on beauty-loving men to strive-ment, struggle & keenness..... It is no use meeting lazy men half-way.....". At another time, however, he could write: "It is my theory to like vulgarity — to think well of it, to champion it, to gird myself always to fight on its side." It might be unhelpful to interpret these and other contradictions as evidence of a split personality; for Grainger frequently alluded to the severity which he claimed pervades his music, however apparently jolly; his jovial excesses should be seen against this sombre background. ".....on the whole I think the entire musical world is entirely oblivious of the whole world of bitterness, resentment, iconoclasm & denunciation that lies behind my music. If they were aware of it I am not sure it would make any difference.....I have always enjoyed composing, & always composed easily. No 'wretchedness' there. But the whole emotional stir behind all my music (except some 4-5 light, bright numbers, mostly folk-music) is so utterly the opposite of what the public wants (anywhere in the world) that a blast of fiery unwillingness meets every composition I put forward.....And the worth of my music will never be guessed, or its value to mankind felt, until the approach to my music is consciously undertaken as 'a pilgrimage to sorrows'."

On many levels, this book is strongly recommended.

Roger Buckley.

NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE MUSIC

A SOCIAL EXPERIMENT by Reginald Nettel

64 pages, 17 illustrations. Triad Press. £4.50.

There may be members of the Delius Society who could not accurately pinpoint the town of Hanley on a map, but they will quickly recognise its importance in the Delius saga, for it was here in 1908 that the composer made one of his few experiments in conducting, the occasion being the second English performance of "Appalachia". At the end of the same year Beecham gave "Sea Drift" there, conducting from memory after the score had myseriously disappeared. The choir was the North Staffordshire District Choral Society, of which Beecham says in his Delius biography: "Under its excellent choirmaster, James Whewall, it had a bright ringing tone, undeviating pitch and a sensibility that marked it apart from most other larger choral bodies of the day." He took it to the Queen's Hall the next summer for the first complete performance of "A Mass of Life", when it sang "with brilliance and conviction". Elgar-lovers will remember Hanley as the place where Dr. Swinnerton Heap gave the first performance of "King Olaf" in 1896, an event generally regarded as the beginning of Elgar's rise to fame. Heap's untimely death in 1900 during the rehearsals for the first performance of "The Dream of Gerontius" contributed largely to the resulting debacle, but Whewall atoned in 1903 by preparing the work for the composer to conduct in the same town.

Why Hanley? Reginald Nettel, who was born and brought up in the area, has already written about it in his 1944 volume "Music in the Five Towns", and he explains that its subtitle, "A Study of the Social Influence of Music in an Industrial District" was interpreted by some readers as just the reverse: the influence of society on music. The new book is therefore sub-titled "A Social Experiment", and traces the simultaneous development of music and general education, from the pioneering work in sight-singing by Curwen and Hullah, through the selfless choir-training of their pupils, to the ultimate establishment of one of the bastions of the English choral tradition. Whewall, who pronounced his name "Whee-wall', was a former miner who began as a village choirmaster. In later years his sopranos found their loyalties tested when he forbade the wearing of corsets because they restricted the breathing; by now, however, the choir had risen to such a prestigious position that its members could ill-afford to flout the fashions of the day! It is the author's opinion that if Whewall had not died shortly after the "Mass of Life" performance in 1909, the Musical League might have held its second annual Festival in North Staffordshire, but this was not to be.

Delius was, of course, Vice-President of the League, and as such debarred, along with Elgar and Bantock, from having his compositions

performed at its concerts. London critics asked how the League was expected to flourish without the music of these composers, a fact which the author feels must have surprised them. "Could they [presumably the critics] really have been ignorant of the claims of such men as Holst and Vaughan Williams? Did they think even of Havergal Brian...., he asks. I take it that Mr. Nettel is implying that by 1908 Elgar, Delius and Bantock were of the older generation of British composers, and therefore strictly outside the scope of the Musical League; but surely their compositions would have enlarged the audiences greatly, as well as placing the novelties among the works of established masters?

As I have already indicated, most of the names in this book are figures from musical history; even Elgar and Delius are unlikely to have been seen and remembered by anyone under the age of fifty. Yet spanning almost the whole story is that extraordinarily long-lived musician Havergal Brian, and it is inevitable and right that he claims a chapter here. Ernest Newman figures also, and is shown to be the catalyst that formed the Musical League. It is sad that after two World Wars there is no longer considered to be a need for the musical activities chronicled in this book, and that, as the author says, people pay others to make music for them instead of making it themselves.

I believe it to be part of a reviewer's task to mention the shortcomings of a book, so let me briefly say that I find the index too short, being only concerned with names of people; that I wish Mr. Nettel had avoided such occasional colloquialisms as "hated the guts of" and "kicked off the board"; and that I am surprised the printer has been allowed to get away with half a page in a different type-face. Apart from this, the book comes up to the very high standard we have come to expect from Triad Press, with thick pages, pleasing layout, and illustrated end-papers. A most interesting addition to musical literature.

Christopher Redwood

Forthcoming Events

5th August at 7.30 p.m.

Sir Charles Groves' Farewell Concert with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, in the Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool. Programme: *Brigg Fair* (Delius), Piano Concerto No. 3 (McCabe) (First Performance), Enigma Variations (Elgar). Tickets 80p, £1.20, £1.60 and £2.00.

29, 30, 31st August, 1, 2nd September at 8.30 p.m; also 31st August and 2nd September at 2.30 p.m.

The Neptune Players (Bristol) present *Hassan* at the Minack Theatre, Porthcurno, Penzance. All tickets for this open-air theatre cost 80p.

22nd September at 7.30 p.m.

Delius Society Meeting at Holborn Public Libraries, Theobalds Road, London WC1. Eric Fenby talks about Delius's 'Cello and Double Concertos.

1st November - 15th December.

Exhibition *The Young Delius* in the foyer of the Royal Festival Hall, London.

Note: admission to the exhibition can only be gained by holding a ticket for a Festival Hall concert. So far as is known, no music by Delius is being performed at the RFH during this period.

24th November at 7.30 p.m.

Delius Society Meeting at Holborn Public Libraries, Theobalds Road, London WC1.

A centenary lecture-recital on Roger Quilter, with Christopher Redwood (tenor) and Robert Threlfall (piano).

27th January 1978.

The Fitzwilliam String Quartet will play the Delius String Quartet at Bradford.

19th April 1978.

Sir Charles Groves conducts *A Mass of Life* at the Royal Festival Hall, London.

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